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Inside the Climate Change Conference hall in Copenhagen, Denmark

## COPENHAGEN CLIMATE CHANGE MEETING

The United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference began on 7th December.

The meeting is being held in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. Some people have described it as the most important meeting in human history. More than 15,000 people from 194 countries are attending.

The Copenhagen meeting is also known as COP15. COP stands for Conference of the Parties. It is the 15th time this group has met. The first meeting was in 1995. The conference lasts for two weeks and ends on 18th December.

The meeting is being held to try to get all countries to agree about what should be done to slow down, and eventually reduce, global warming.

Although a few disagree, most scientists believe human activity is responsible for the rise in average world temperatures over the last 160 years. This is

known as the 'industrial period' and covers the years for which scientists have accurate temperature records. The average rise in temperatures during this time has been calculated as 0.7°C (1.25°F).

It was around 160 years ago that some European countries first began to burn large quantities of coal as a source of power. Soon after this other countries such as Japan and the USA also became industrialised. Today most countries burn fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal – for generating electricity, transport, heating and cooking.

Scientists know burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide into the Earth's atmosphere. Carbon dioxide, and other gasses such as methane, have been called 'greenhouse gasses'. This is because they trap heat from the Sun in the atmosphere, similar to the glass in a greenhouse. This greenhouse effect, scientists say, is causing

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world temperatures to rise. The scientists also believe continuing temperature rises could alter our climate.

By studying old coral reefs, the rings in ancient pieces of wood, and by drilling deep holes in thick ice, scientists can work out how much carbon dioxide was in the atmosphere at different times in history. They say there is now more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than there has been for over 800,000 years.

The minority of scientists who think humans are not responsible for global warming say the Earth naturally heats up and cools down over long periods. Some of them say global warming is caused by the Sun's activity and water vapour in the atmosphere. Much of the extra carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, they argue, comes from volcanoes.

Nearly all the world's political leaders agree that human activity is the cause of recent global warming. Yet they don't all agree on what should be done about it.

Burning fossil fuels is still the cheapest way to generate power. Replacing this method with non-polluting technologies is expensive. These extra costs can have a big effect on a country's economy.

The meeting in Copenhagen is divided between developed countries and developing countries. Developed countries are those that industrialised a long time ago. About 34 countries are in this group. They include most of Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia and Japan. Other countries are called developing countries. They also burn fossil fuels, but have only started to do so in the recent past. Developing countries include China, India and

Brazil, which have three of the world's fastest-growing economies.

The United Nations (UN) has organised the meeting in Copenhagen. It wants to get agreements on three main things. The first is for developed countries to decide by how much they will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The second is for the bigger developing countries, such as China and India, to decide on limits for their emissions too.

The third is for the developed countries to agree how much money they will pay to developing countries, because it is considered to be the industrialisation of developed countries that caused the problem in the first place. The UN says this money must be used by developing countries to **adopt** green technologies. It may also be needed to build defences against possible rising sea levels and protecting forests from being cut down. Trees absorb carbon dioxide so are a good defence against global warming. Developed countries agree they should give money to developing countries but disagree on how much.

All countries also need to agree on a limit to the average rise in world temperatures. Many developed countries want this to be set at 2°C (3.6°F) higher than when records began 160 years ago. Yet most developing countries want it to be set at less than 1.5°C (2.7°F), a smaller increase.

Some experts say if nothing is done average temperatures will continue to rise. This, they argue, will cause severe storms and droughts, sea levels will rise, and it may not be possible to live in many parts of the world by 2100.

China and the USA are the biggest producers of greenhouse gasses

in the world. China has the world's third-largest economy, after the USA and Japan. The USA said it was not happy about having to pay money to China. However, during the second week of the meeting China said it would not need any of the money paid by developed countries to developing ones.

Before the Copenhagen meeting started, most countries made promises about how they intended to slow down global warming. The UN wants these promises to become **binding** agreements by the end of the meeting. Most experts believe this is unlikely. They think the meeting will end with a political agreement that will not become binding until much later. ■

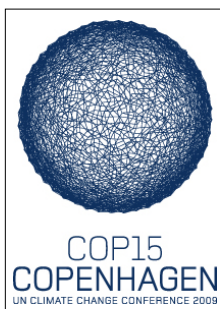
## DREAMLINER'S TEST FLIGHT

On 15th December a new passenger plane, the Dreamliner, completed its first-ever test flight. The Dreamliner has been designed and built by the Boeing Company, one of the largest passenger aircraft makers in the world.



*Dreamliner*

Boeing's main factory is in Washington, in the USA. Boeing is the company that made the 747 aircraft, also known as the Jumbo Jet. The first 'Jumbos' were built around 40 years ago. They are still used by most large airline companies in the world.



The Dreamliner, also known as the 787, is smaller than the 747. The new plane has taken over ten years to design and build. The Dreamliner is very different from other passenger planes. For example, much of the plane is made from a super-strong material called carbon-reinforced composite. Most current aircraft bodies are made from aluminium.

The windows in passenger planes are quite small. Yet, because of the material from which the Dreamliner is made, its windows are much bigger. They don't have push-down blinds as the glass itself can be darkened.

The lights inside the plane can dim or grow lighter to match the daylight and night time of the place to which the plane is flying. The engine noise is also quieter than a 747. The Boeing Company says these things will help to reduce the tiredness – known as jet lag – many people feel after being on a long flight.

As the Dreamliner is much lighter than passenger planes made from aluminium, it will use much less aircraft fuel. This fuel creates a lot of carbon dioxide, so the Dreamliner will be more 'environmentally friendly'. It will also be much less expensive to operate.

The new design has caused problems for Boeing. These meant the first test flight took place two and a half years later than the company had originally planned.

The Dreamliner will carry around 250 passengers – over 100 fewer than can travel on a Jumbo Jet. Boeing believes airline companies want to change the way they work. Currently large planes often fly from one big airport – known as a hub – to another big airport. Passengers then change to smaller planes to reach their destinations. The Dreamliner has been designed to fly long distances

## NewsCAST

**PHONE MUSIC** — On 9th December a group of students in the USA gave a concert of music they had composed themselves. Yet the students didn't use any instruments. Instead they used applications on their iPhones. The students designed and created these as part of a computer science course. They then composed music to play the iPhone applications together. Each student wore a speaker to amplify the music. Scientists and musicians say electronic technology has been used to make music for several decades. The students' teachers think the new iPhone orchestra is an interesting addition to this type of music.

directly from one city airport to another. This means passengers will not have to change planes to reach their final destination.

The Dreamliner's test flight took about four hours. Now a total of six 787s will have to complete nine months of different test flights. These will be done all around the world to test the plane in both hot and cold climates.

Each Dreamliner is expected to cost US\$166 million (£102 million). So far the Boeing Company has received orders for 840 of the planes from more than 50 different airline companies. ■

## ELECTION IN ROMANIA

The second round of Romania's presidential election was held on 6th December. Traian Băsescu won, but the final result was very close.

Romania once had communist leaders who were happy to work

with the Russian-led Soviet Union. In 1989 there was a revolution. Romania's communist president was arrested and he and his wife were shot. Soon afterwards Romania held democratic elections. Since then it has become a member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The country also joined the European Union (EU) in 2007.

In Romania presidential elections are held every five years. Traian Băsescu won the last election in 2004. He is a former mayor of Bucharest, the country's capital city.

The first round of the election was held on 22nd November. Twelve candidates competed for votes, including Mr Băsescu. The two people with the highest number of votes were Mr Băsescu, with just over 32%, and Mircea Geoană who got slightly over 31%.

The rules in Romania say if nobody wins over 50% of the votes, the top two candidates must contest a second election.



*Traian Băsescu, president of Romania*

Mr Geoană is a former foreign minister. He was also Romania's ambassador to the USA in the 1990s.

In the second vote, or run off election, Mr Geoană got 49.66% of the votes. Yet Mr Băsescu just beat him with 50.33%. Mr Băsescu had won, but by only around 70,000 votes.

Each candidate accused the other of cheating. Mr Geoană said he wanted the election to be held again.



He said he would challenge the result in the law courts. But observers who had checked on the election process said they thought the result was fair.

On 14th December the court confirmed that the election result was correct. It said it would therefore not agree to Mr Geoană's request for the election to be rerun. Mr Geoană said he would accept the court's decision. He wished Mr Băsescu success with his second term as president. ■

## NEW MEDITERRANEAN SEA THEORY

Researchers have come up with a new idea on how the Mediterranean Sea was formed.

The Mediterranean Sea is connected to the Atlantic Ocean by the Strait of Gibraltar. On one side of the Strait of Gibraltar is Spain – in Europe – and on the other is Morocco, a North African country. At its narrowest point the Strait of Gibraltar is only 14.2 kilometres (8.9 miles) wide.



Model of the separated Mediterranean Sea

Geologists – scientists who study rocks – know that about 5.6 million years ago, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea became disconnected from each other. This separation lasted around 300,000 years. During this time the sea water in the Mediterranean Sea gradually evaporated. The water level dropped. What was left became more and more salty.

Then seawater from the Atlantic Ocean began to flow over the land that was once where the Strait of Gibraltar is now. It flowed into the Mediterranean Sea and joined the two together again. Scientists have named this event the Zanclean flood. Although this is called a flood, it was thought to have taken about 10,000 years for the Mediterranean Sea to refill.



Satellite picture of the Strait of Gibraltar

But scientists in Spain now think the refilling of the Mediterranean happened much more quickly than this, and that it really was a big dramatic flood.

The scientists studied the shape of the seabed to the east of the Strait of Gibraltar. With computer models, they then worked out how quickly this land area was eroded by the sea water when it started flowing into the Mediterranean.

Until now, most scientists have believed this was like a waterfall gradually filling up the Mediterranean Sea. The Spanish scientists claim it was more like a long ramp. They calculate that at one stage the water flowed down the ramp at a rate three times greater than that at which the River Amazon flows into the sea today.

If the water flowed at this speed, the scientists claim, it would have

taken between two months and two years to fill the Mediterranean Sea. The water level in the Mediterranean, the scientists say, could have been rising by as much as ten metres (32 feet) every day.

In Ancient Greek and Roman times the rocks on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar were called the Pillars of Hercules. According to legend, Hercules used his superhuman power to smash through some mountains, connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean. ■

## INTELLIGENT OCTOPUSES?

A type of octopus that lives in seas around Indonesia has been filmed doing some unusual things. The Australian scientists who took the film were surprised to see the octopuses picking up empty coconut shells, carrying them along the seabed and then making shelters out of them.

The species the scientists filmed is called the veined octopus, or *amphioctopus marginatus*. Its body is around eight centimetres (three inches) long and its tentacles stretch for about 15 centimetres (six inches). The octopus lives in areas of quite shallow water where the seabed is sandy.

Often these octopuses can be seen burying themselves in the sand with only their eyes showing. They are also known to squeeze inside empty clamshells as a way to protect themselves against predators.

While diving in the seas around Indonesia the scientists noticed one octopus spreading itself over half a coconut shell. The half-coconut shell had been discarded in the sea after someone had eaten the coconut inside. The shell had then sunk to the seabed.

The scientists filmed four octopuses making shelters out of discarded coconut shells. When an octopus found a coconut shell it cleaned out the sand collected inside it. The octopus then managed to 'walk' along the seabed, using its tentacles like legs, while holding the shell. The octopus carried the shell for a distance of about 20 metres (65 feet). If the octopus had one half of a shell it turned it over and hid underneath it. If it had managed to collect two half shells the octopus placed one on top of the other and climbed inside.



*Veined octopus in its coconut shelter*

The scientists think that using old clamshells to hide inside has taught the octopuses that coconut shells also make good shelters. There are few places to hide where the octopuses live, the scientists say, so the coconut 'houses' are good protection against larger sea creatures that feed on the octopuses.

It was once thought that only humans were able to make use of 'tools'. Yet scientists have now recorded some other mammals, and birds, using tools, such as sticks, to help them get food. This, scientists say, shows that these animals have some 'intelligence'. Some people now think veined octopus should be added to this list. This would make them the first [invertebrates](#) to be recognised as being 'intelligent'. ■

## ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER ATTACKED

On 13th December, Silvio Berlusconi, the prime minister of Italy, was attacked. He was hit in the face by an object thrown at him while he walked through a crowd of people. After the attack he was taken to hospital.

Silvio Berlusconi is one of Italy's richest businessmen. He owns newspaper and television companies. He has been prime minister twice before. He was re-elected prime minister in 2008.

Some people think it is wrong for the prime minister of a country to also be the owner of large companies. This, they say, is because he or she may be tempted to make government decisions that might be helpful to his or her own companies.

Mr Berlusconi, who is 73, has recently been accused of having several young girlfriends. In May his wife announced she planned to divorce him. Mr Berlusconi has also been accused of not paying the right amount of tax in the past. Yet despite these problems many people still support him, and he is a popular prime minister. Some Italians say they admire him because he has a reputation of 'getting things done'. This, they say, is unusual in Italy because the political system makes governing the country difficult.

Mr Berlusconi was attending a political meeting, or rally, in the city of Milan when he was attacked. As he was shaking hands with people in the crowd a man approached and threw something in his face. The object was a model of Milan's cathedral. These models are made out of a type of plaster and sold in the city as [souvenirs](#).

Security guards helped Mr Berlusconi to a waiting car. He then

stood up on the edge of where the car door opens. An official said this was to show everyone in the crowd that he was not badly injured. He was then taken to hospital.

The next day it was confirmed that Mr Berlusconi had a broken nose, two broken teeth and a cut lip that needed stitches. Doctors say he will need a few weeks to recover. The man who threw the object at the prime minister was arrested.



*Silvio Berlusconi, prime minister of Italy*

Giorgio Napolitano is the Italian president. He and Mr Berlusconi's main political opponents said they were sad to hear of the attack on the prime minister.

Some people were surprised by how easy it was for the man to get close enough to throw something at Mr Berlusconi. It's thought the prime minister will be surrounded by more security guards in the future. ■

## NEW INDIAN STATE

Andhra Pradesh is one of India's largest states. On 9th December an official announced the Indian government had agreed for Andhra Pradesh to be split in two. His announcement followed many protests and an 11-day hunger strike by a local politician.

India has 28 states. Many were set up around 50 years ago as a re-organisation of local government.

Many different languages are used in India, and some states were set up as areas where people spoke the same language. In India, English is often used as a common language among people whose native languages are different.

The new state in the northern part of Andhra Pradesh will be called Telangana. It will have a population of about 30 million. Most of them speak Telugu.

For many years leaders in the area, which will become Telangana, have wanted a separate state. Recently several protests were held in Hyderabad, the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Many students took part. Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao, the leader of the local political party demanding the new state, went on a hunger strike. He refused to eat anything unless the new state was created. When Mr Rao was told the news he agreed to end his hunger strike.



Many international information technology (IT) companies, such as Microsoft and Google, have offices in Hyderabad. Together with Bangalore, a city in the south of India, Hyderabad is a popular base for both Indian and international companies. The protesters managed to close down some of Hyderabad's office and shopping areas.

## NewsCAST

**ROOM WITH A VIEW** — Hotels in towns and cities in Japan near to railways often have problems getting people to stay in rooms that overlook train tracks. This is because it is noisy and people do not like the views. Now the hotels have come up with a new way to promote these rooms. They are offering them to people who spot trains as a hobby. Trainspotters – or railfans – look out for particular engines and mark down their numbers. The hotels are now advertising a special deal for trainspotters. The offer even includes a copy of the railway timetable.

Those wanting a new state complained that the more wealthy southern area of Andhra Pradesh had neglected the northern area. The northern area is more **rural** than the southern one.

Politicians from the southern area of Andhra Pradesh are angry about the decision. Some have already decided to resign. They say Hyderabad should not become part of the new Telangana state. They insist it would not be fair because the southern area has spent a lot of money making the city a place in which both international and Indian companies want to work and invest money.

On 17th December the people who want Andhra Pradesh to remain as one state said they would organise a general strike – called a **bandh** – in protest. Some people have suggested that they too may now go on hunger strike.

Some people say although the decision has been made, it will be many years before there is an official new state called Telangana. This

is because the plan will now have to be agreed by the local parliament, called the state assembly, and the country's national Parliament. ■

## STRANGE LIGHT IN THE SKY

Tromsø is a city in the far north of Norway. On the morning of 9th December many people in Tromsø saw a strange spiral of blue light with a long trail in the dark skies.

In winter Tromsø is in almost 24-hour darkness. The town is so far north that the Sun barely rises above the horizon in midwinter. At this time of year it is possible to see the Northern Lights from this part of Norway.

The Northern Lights are a coloured flashing in the dark sky. They can be seen in the far north of the Northern Hemisphere. The Lights are also known as the *aurora borealis*. This name comes from Aurora, the Roman goddess of dawn, and Boreas, the Ancient Greek for north wind.

The Northern Lights are a geomagnetic storm in space. The energy that causes them comes from a stream of charged **particles** from the Sun. These particles flow like a river, or electric current, through twisted bundles of magnetic fields connecting the upper atmosphere of the Earth to the Sun. The energy is released as a dramatic display of 'dancing' coloured lights.

People living in Tromsø frequently see the Northern Lights in winter. So they knew the strange spiral light in the sky was different. When the strange light appeared many people were on their way to work. Some stopped their cars on the side of the road and got out to watch. Pictures of the blue light were shown on Norwegian television. At first



some people thought it might be an unidentified flying object (UFO), or caused by an alien spaceship.

But military experts suspected the light was something to do with a Russian missile test. At first Russian officials denied this. Yet on 10th December a military official in Moscow, the capital of Russia, admitted a new Russian navy missile had failed after being launched.



Strange light in the sky above Tromsø

The Russian official said the missile had been fired as a test from a submarine in the White Sea. The missile, called the Bulava, has been developed to be launched by a new type of Russian submarine. These submarines are designed to carry 12 Bulava missiles. The missiles can travel as far as 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles).

Experts say Bulava missile tests have now failed several times. One Russian military expert, who often criticises his country's leaders, said the failed missile test had made some nice fireworks for the Norwegians, but had embarrassed the Russian government. ■

## GIANT ICEBERG

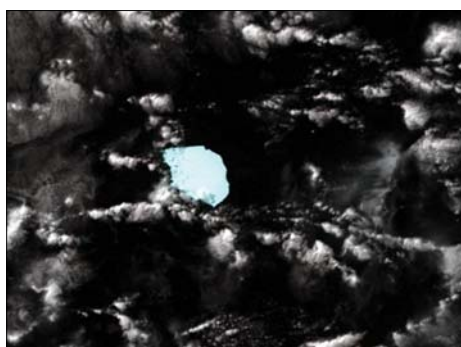
On 11th December, Australian officials issued a warning to ships. This said a giant iceberg was drifting in the sea about 1,700 kilometres (1,056 miles) off the south west coast of the country.

Glaciologists – scientists who study glaciers and ice – say the iceberg is part of a large chunk of ice that broke away from Antarctica many years ago.

Antarctica has several ice shelves. These are huge floating plates, or platforms, of ice around its coastline. Sometimes, large chunks of these shelves break away and become icebergs. This process is called 'calving'. When icebergs float in the sea, typically only about one-ninth or one-tenth of their mass is above the surface. So the largest part of the iceberg is underwater.

One of the biggest ice shelves in Antarctica is the Ross Ice Shelf. Some parts of it are several hundred metres thick. This is the shelf from which the giant iceberg originally calved in 1999. Since then it has drifted around Antarctica. For five years ocean currents kept it in the same place.

The iceberg has been labelled 'B17B'. Scientists give larger icebergs names and track them using satellite pictures.



Satellite picture of B17B

B17B has an area of about 140 square kilometres (54 square miles), but it is shrinking. Experts say it is unusual for large icebergs such as B17B to travel so far north. But they think global warming could cause icebergs of this size to become more frequent.

Glaciologists say it is unlikely B17B will reach the coast of

Australia. This is because the further north the iceberg travels the warmer the seas become. The warmer temperatures will cause the iceberg to crack and gradually break up into smaller pieces. Yet these smaller pieces could still be a **hazard** to ships sailing in the area.

The largest iceberg ever recorded was called B15. It calved from the Ross Ice Shelf in 2000. Yet by 2006 it had broken up into many smaller pieces. ■

## NEW TOURIST SPACESHIP

The first spaceship designed to carry tourists was **unveiled** on 7th December. The ceremony took place in California, in the USA.

A company called Virgin Galactic has built the spaceship, or 'space plane'. The company's boss, Richard Branson, is a businessman from the UK. At the ceremony he announced the space plane has been named *Enterprise*, after the famous spaceship in the *Star Trek* television programme.

The craft will be able to take six passengers and two crew members to the edge of the atmosphere, 104 kilometres (65 miles) above the surface of the Earth.

The *Enterprise* has been designed so it attaches to two aircraft flying side by side. The aircraft are joined by the wings that are closest to one another. These two aircraft, known as the 'mother ship', carry the *Enterprise* under their joined-together wings. Mr Branson has named the mother ship *Eve*. This is his mother's name.

*Eve* will carry *Enterprise* to a height of 17.6 kilometres (11 miles). Then *Enterprise*, with the six passengers and two crew members

on board, will be released. *Enterprise* will use its own rockets to go straight up in the air at a speed of 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) per hour. When it reaches the edge of the atmosphere the passengers will be able to float in zero gravity. This period of weightlessness will last for only five minutes before *Enterprise* starts to come back down to Earth again.



*Enterprise connected to both parts of Eve*

During the last part of its descent, *Enterprise* will act like a glider. It will not be powered by an engine, but will just glide back to the place from which it took off. The whole trip is expected to take two and a half hours. Passengers will have a window to each side and one above them. During the flight they will be able to see the curvature of the Earth.

Mr Branson has said that space tourists who want to travel on *Enterprise* will have to do some safety training before the trip. They will also have to pass a medical exam to make sure they are healthy enough to take the flight. Mr Branson says that he, his son and daughter will all be on the first flight. His mother will travel in *Eve* and be allowed to press the button that launches *Enterprise* when it reaches a height of 17.6 kilometres (11 miles).

The spacecraft will now be put through several test flights. The first passenger flights are not expected to take place for another 18 months. Mr Branson insists the technology

used to build the plane is safer than that used by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

The cost for a trip on *Enterprise* has been set at US\$200,000 (£123,000). If *Enterprise* is successful Mr Branson hopes Virgin Galactic will build more similar spacecraft. If this happens the cost of a ticket could get much cheaper.

The company claims it has already sold more than 300 tickets. Two well-known scientists – Professor Stephen Hawking and Professor James Lovelock – have got tickets. Professor Lovelock is 90 years old.

The *Enterprise* will fly from a specially-built spaceport. This is being built in the state of New Mexico, in the USA. It is thought that if other companies start offering trips to space in future, they will also use the new spaceport. ■

## GIANT BALLOON HUNT

At the beginning of December people in the USA were invited to take part in an unusual event – a giant balloon hunt.

The event was held to mark the 40th anniversary of the internet. At first the internet was used as a way for military departments in the USA to share information. The Pentagon, the headquarters of the military in the USA, sponsored the red balloon hunt.

One military department wanted to study how the internet has changed and how people can now use it. The department was especially interested in how people can use social networking websites to find and share information.

Ten large red balloons were placed in different places in the USA. Each was about 2.4 metres

(eight feet) in diameter and tied down so it remained floating above the ground. Anyone could enter the competition. The person or team that found all the balloons in the fastest time would win a cash prize.

Some people predicted it would only take about five minutes before someone had the correct answer. Others thought it would never be solved. In the end a team from MIT – a famous research university – won the competition. Its prize was US\$40,000 (£24,630). The MIT team took just under nine hours to come up with the right answer. It's thought many teams had found out where at least eight of the balloons were by the time the winners had found all ten.

The organisers will now speak with those who took part, to learn how they made use of social networks to find the balloons.

It's thought some people put up false balloons to mislead other teams. So one thing the organisers are interested in is how the teams

## NEWSCAST

**CAR BRAKE MYSTERY SOLVED** — People in the UK became worried when several cars in the same area had their brakes damaged. The tubes that are part of the cars' braking systems had been cut. The oily liquid called brake fluid – needed to make the brakes work – had leaked out. When this happens the car is not safe to drive. An expert was called to inspect the tubes. He thought the damage was not done by criminals trying to harm people, but by foxes. He said foxes were known to chew through brake tubes because they liked the taste of the fluid.





decided whether the information they got was true. This is a useful skill when using the internet. People have to be able to decide if the information they are looking at on a website is correct.

Another thing the organisers were interested in was how the teams managed to **recruit** helpers using social networks. This is known as ‘crowdsourcing’. Some think crowdsourcing could be used for other things, such as finding missing children.



*Ten red balloons displayed as samples for the people taking part in the competition*

Different teams used different methods to get helpers. Some said they would donate the prize money to charity. They hoped this would make people want to help.

The organisers are also studying how people used the balloon hunt for personal gain. For example, some people pretended they knew where the balloons were, when they really didn't. Others posted offers saying they would sell details of where they had seen one of the balloons.

The winning team got people to help by offering them a part of the prize money. The amount depended on what they had done. For example, a person who spotted a balloon got US\$2,000. The person who invited the spotter to join the team's network got US\$1,000. The person who invited the person who got US\$1,000 received US\$500. The next person got US\$250 and so on.

The winning team said if any of the prize money is left after paying everyone who helped, it will be given to charity. ■

## PASSIVE SMOKING REPORT

The World Health Organization (WHO) has written a report about what it calls the ‘global tobacco epidemic’. The report is about the dangers of smoking and passive smoking. It says more should be done to make places in the world free of tobacco smoke.

An epidemic is a disease or infection that easily spreads from one person to another or can be caught by many different people at the same time.

The WHO is part of the United Nations (UN). Its job is to advise governments about public health. The WHO says it calls tobacco an ‘epidemic’ because so many people are now affected by illnesses caused by smoking tobacco. Many who are affected, the WHO claims, are people who do not actually smoke, but who breathe in smoke from other people who do.

When people smoke, they blow smoke out into the air. The burning tobacco in a cigarette or pipe also produces smoke. Passive smoking happens when people breathe tobacco smoke in from other smokers.

This can be harmful even if these people do not smoke themselves.

Passive smoking can happen if you are in a house or car with someone who is smoking. It can cause irritation to the eyes and nose, as well as coughing and problems with breathing.



Some governments have made laws about where people can smoke. This is to try to stop people – especially children – from being exposed to passive smoking. Many countries now don't allow smoking in enclosed buildings such as restaurants and offices. Some governments have now banned people from smoking if they are driving a car with a child inside.

Tobacco is a type of dried plant leaf. The WHO says smoking tobacco is the world's biggest cause of **preventable** deaths. It estimates five million people die from tobacco-related illnesses and problems every year. It thinks this number may rise to as many as eight million by 2030.

The WHO wants more countries to pass more non-smoking laws to protect people from passive smoking. Its report sets out a plan called ‘mpower’. Each letter stands for something related to reducing the use of tobacco. It wants to **Monitor** tobacco use and how it is being prevented; **Protect** people from passive smoking; **Offer** ways to help people stop smoking; **Warn** people that smoking is harmful to their health; **Enforce** bans on advertising tobacco products; and **Raise** taxes on cigarettes so they cost more and people will stop buying them.

The WHO report says an increasing number of countries now have smoke-free laws. Yet most people in the world are still not protected from passive smoking. ■

## THE EDDIE COMPETITION

On 9th December, Greg Long, from the USA, was crowned the winner of the Eddie Aikau memorial surfing competition.

The surfing contest, known as 'The Eddie', is held in Hawaii, in the Pacific Ocean. It can only take place when weather conditions produce giant waves of around 12 metres (40 feet) high. This happens only every few years. The last time the Eddie was held was in 2004.

Eddie Aikau was the first lifeguard to work at Waimea Beach in Hawaii. He is believed to have saved many people's lives. Mr Aikau also won several surfing awards and competitions. He died in 1978. He was travelling in a seagoing canoe with a big crew, when the canoe began leaking and capsized. Mr Aikau paddled away on his surfboard to try to get help. But he was never seen again.



Surfers taking part in 'The Eddie'

As well as the memorial surfing competition, there is also an Eddie Aikau Foundation. This organisation helps to promote Hawaiian culture and heritage. The Hawaiian Islands are part of the USA.

The timing of the competition depends on a special weather event. A storm builds in the North Pacific Ocean. This causes waves in the ocean known as swells. Energy builds up in the swells causing them to get bigger as they head towards the shore. The storm itself does not hit the Hawaiian Islands. This means the weather on the land is quite calm. But when the waves begin to break, they can be up to 12 to 15 metres (40 to 50 feet) in height.

The waves were made even bigger because of El Niño. This is a weather event that happens every few years. El Niño is a period when the temperature and pressure at the surface of parts of the Pacific Ocean change. It causes many different extreme weather conditions around the world. One of these is to increase the swells that cause the huge waves in Waimea Bay.

The organisers of the competition watch the weather and waves before deciding whether the contest can take place. Sometimes competitors are told 'The Eddie' will happen only a few hours before it starts.

Only the very best surfers are asked to take part. This is because the giant waves can be extremely dangerous. While practising, one world-champion surfer badly damaged his ankle and was taken to hospital. Other surfers said the waves were very unpredictable and it was easy to get hurt. Some had to be rescued by lifeguards. Local officials warned people to stay away from coastlines because of the giant waves.

When they heard the 'The Eddie' was going to take place thousands of people went to Waimea Bay beach to watch. ■

## DISAGREEMENT OVER ANCIENT STONE

An ancient stone slab has caused an argument between the UK and Egypt.

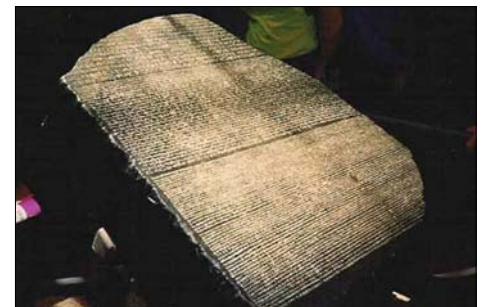
The stone, known as the Rosetta Stone, is an Ancient Egyptian artefact. It has been displayed in the British Museum, in London, the capital of the UK, for over 200 years. The Stone measures 114 centimetres (45 inches) at its tallest point and about 72 centimetres (28 inches) wide.

Words and symbols are carved on one side.

The Rosetta Stone is thought by many to be the most important artefact ever found in Egypt. This is because there are three different translations of the same text carved on it. One version is in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Another is in Demotic script – an 'everyday' Ancient Egyptian language. The third version is in Ancient Greek.

Hieroglyphs were symbols used by the Ancient Egyptians as their written language. This form of writing went out of use nearly 2,000 years ago. No records about how it was used existed. So in the 1700s, when historians began to study Ancient Egyptian civilisation, they could not read the hieroglyphs on the buildings and artefacts.

The discovery of the Rosetta Stone changed this. Language experts were able to read the Ancient Greek text on the stone. As they knew the text was the same as the hieroglyphs, they could begin to work out what the symbols meant and how they were used. This made the Rosetta Stone a very important discovery for Egyptology.



The Rosetta Stone

French soldiers discovered the Stone at a place then called Rosetta, in Egypt, in 1799. At the time, a French army was occupying part of the country. Two years later the French surrendered to British military leaders in Egypt.

The Rosetta Stone and other artefacts discovered by the French were handed over to the British. Before doing this the French made a few plaster copies of the Stone. The British took the Stone back to England. It was put on display in the British Museum in 1802. Language experts then began to try to work out how the hieroglyphs were used.

In the 1820s Jean-François Champollion, a French scholar, made use of the Stone to finally **de-cipher** the Ancient Egyptian written language.

Dr Zahi Hawass is the head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities. He has asked the British Museum to return the Rosetta Stone to Egypt. Dr Hawass says there are many Egyptian artefacts in museums around the world. He claims these were all stolen in the past and should now be returned to Egypt.

The person in charge of all the museums in the UK said the Rosetta Stone would not be returned to Egypt. The British Museum, he said, might agree for the Stone to be loaned to a museum in Egypt if Dr Hawass were to request it. ■

## IRELAND'S NEW BUDGET

The Republic of Ireland's new budget was announced on 9th December. A budget is a type of plan for saving and spending money in the future. The plan was announced by Brian Lenihan, Ireland's finance minister.

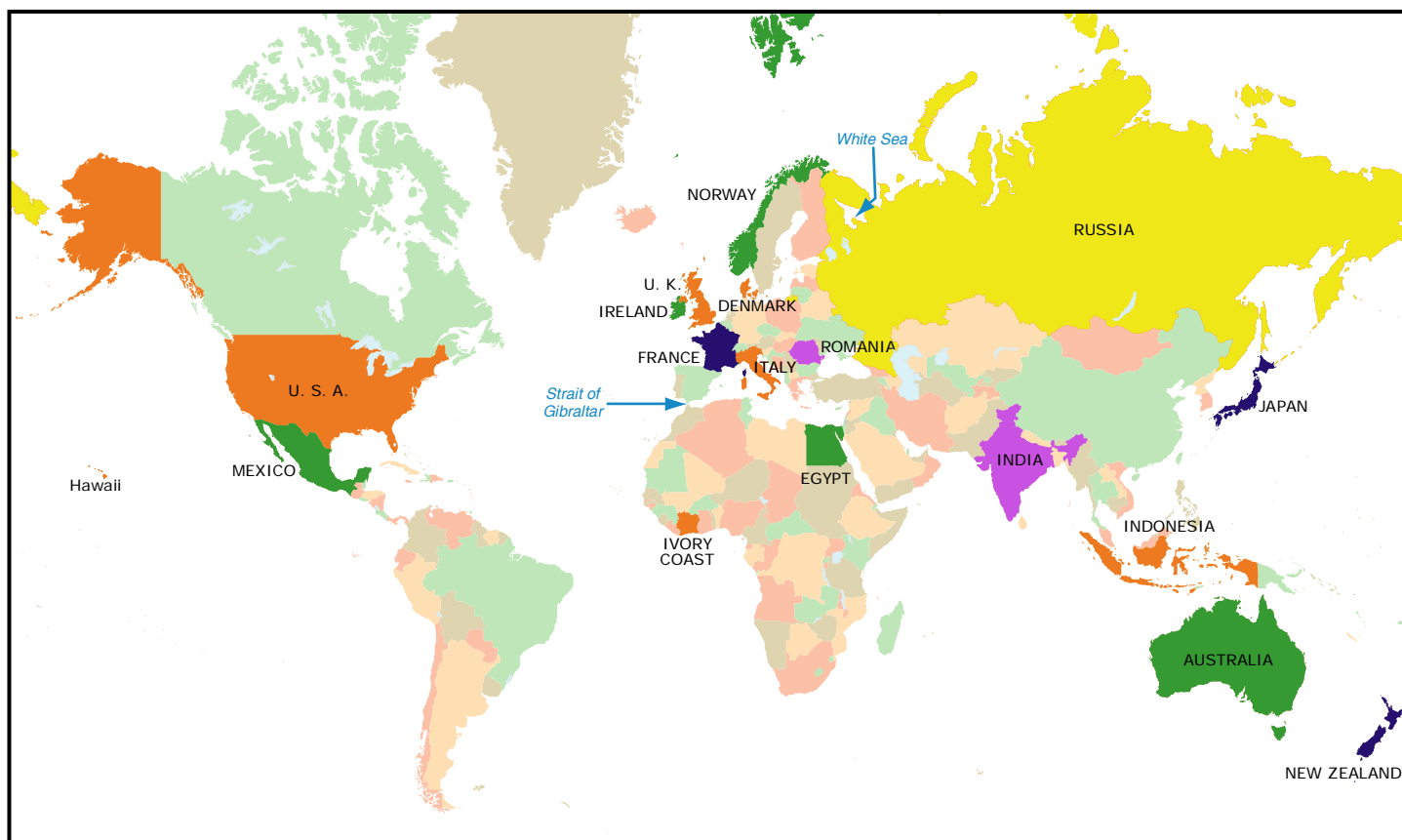
Most companies have annual budgets. These predict how much money the company will make in the next 12 months and what this extra money will be used for. Equally, a company might expect to lose money. If this is predicted, its

budget will explain what the company will do to save money and how it plans to borrow the money it needs.



*Ireland's finance minister, Brian Lenihan*

Like companies, governments also produce budgets. A country's budget sets out how much money will be raised by taxes. It also says if taxes will go up or down, and what the tax money will be spent on. Many countries spend more than they receive in taxes so they have to borrow extra money. The amount they have to borrow for the next





12 months is sometimes called the budget **deficit**.

Ireland has had the same money problems that have recently affected other countries. In 2008 the Irish government had to use large amounts of money to stop some Irish banks from going out of business. Similar banking problems also happened in other countries such as the USA and the UK.

Some experts predict that Ireland's budget deficit will be as high as €21 billion (£19 billion) in 2010.

Ireland is a member of the Euro-zone. This means it is one of 16 European Union (EU) member countries, out of a total of 27, that use the euro as their currency. The EU has rules that say a country's deficit must not go above a certain level. Ireland's deficit is almost four times higher than the EU-allowed limit.

Mr Lenihan made his budget announcement in the Dáil – the Irish parliament.

To save money, Mr Lenihan said, most people who are paid by the government will have their wages reduced. This includes teachers, policemen and hospital workers. The pay of those earning the most will be cut by 15%. The Taoiseach, or Irish prime minister, Brian Cowan, will have his wages reduced by 20%. Those earning lower wages will have them cut by 5%. Mr Lenihan said the amount of money paid to people who work for the government had to be reduced to help the country save money. He said that only one tax would rise. This will be on the price of petrol.

Some people are angry about Mr Lenihan's budget plan. They complain that large amounts of money were spent on the banks and now ordinary people seem to be paying for it out of their wages. Some

workers have threatened to go on strike in protest.

Other European countries have announced similar budgets. On 14th December, George Papandreou, the prime minister of Greece, said many government workers in his country will have their pay reduced. ■

## FAIRTRADE KIT KAT

Nestlé, the company that makes Kit Kat chocolate bars, has announced a change for Kit Kats sold in the UK and Ireland. From January they will be allowed to carry a new symbol – the Fairtrade logo.

The Fairtrade symbol is awarded to products if they are made according to a set of strict rules. These rules say how the workers who grow or make the things needed for the products must be treated. The rules also say how much the workers should be paid.

Organisations that support fair trade think many people in poorer countries are not paid enough for the things they grow or make. Many companies in wealthier countries want to sell their foods or products at cheap prices so more people will buy them. One way to keep prices low is to pay lower wages to those who grow or make what companies need for their products.

If a company can prove it follows all the rules of fair trade, it is allowed to put the Fairtrade logo, or symbol, on its packaging. Buyers then know people working to grow or make the things needed for the product are paid a fair wage, and their work is not dangerous.

In some countries, such as the UK, it is becoming more common to see products carrying the Fairtrade logo. The most common Fairtrade foods are tea, rice, coffee, sugar and chocolate. But the symbol can be seen on many other products too, including flowers and cotton clothing.

Nestlé buys the cocoa used in making its Kit Kat chocolate from farmers in the Ivory Coast, in Africa. To be awarded the Fairtrade symbol the company has agreed to pay the cocoa farmers £1,060 (US\$1,750) per tonne of cocoa beans. This means the farmers will earn more money than before.

Some of this extra money will be used to set up schools and small hospitals in the areas where the farmers work. Nestlé has also agreed to pay to plant more cocoa trees. The Ivory Coast is estimated to grow around 43% of the world's cocoa.

Only Kit Kats made in the UK will have the Fairtrade logo on them. In the USA Hershey – a large American chocolate company – makes Kit Kat bars.



*Kit Kat wrapper*

Several months ago one of Nestlé's rivals in the UK – Cadbury – was allowed to put the Fairtrade logo on one of its most popular chocolate bars. So many people think Nestlé's recent decision to follow Fairtrade's rules was made because one of its competitors had already done it.

Nestlé says more Kit Kats are sold in the UK and Ireland than in any other country. ■

## HOMESCHOOL PETITION

Parents in the UK who choose to educate their children at home have signed a [petition](#) and given it to the UK government. The petition asks the government not to make any changes to the rules about home education – also called homeschooling – in the country.

The government wants to introduce new homeschooling rules. These state that parents who teach their children at home will have to register with the government every year. Government inspectors would also be allowed to enter and check on homes where children are taught by their parents.

In some countries, such as the USA, homeschooling is quite common. There are many rules that govern how parents may educate

their children. For example, home-schooled students may be required to take an exam each year to make sure they are receiving the same level of education as they would if they attended school. Parents may also have to sign special local government forms. These are needed so officials can make sure all school-aged children are receiving an education.

Parents who choose to homeschool their children do so for several different reasons. If they live in remote areas it may be too far to travel to the nearest school. This is the case with many homeschooling families in Australia. Another reason is that some people don't like how local schools are run or some of the subjects they teach. Other parents want their children to have a religious education not available in local schools. Some think all children shouldn't be expected to learn at the same level just because they are the same age. These people want to teach their child at what they believe is the right level and pace at home.

Currently, in the UK, government officials can ask homeschooling families for information on how they are educating their children. Yet they are not allowed to visit people's homes to see or 'inspect' parents' teaching.

Many homeschooling families are angry about the proposed rules. They say the government is suspicious that homeschoolers are mistreating their children and keeping them at home to hide this.

The homeschoolers say there are plenty of [guidelines](#) already. These are to make sure children taught at home get a good education and are safe and treated properly. Those who have signed the petition want

the government to concentrate on these guidelines instead of bringing in new rules. They believe the suggested changes haven't been thought about properly. They also think the government should have taken more time to discuss the proposed new rules with parents who teach their children at home. ■

## PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

From 3rd to 9th December, a group of people met in Melbourne, in Australia, for the Parliament of the World's Religions.

Every five years since 1993, people from all over the world have attended the Parliament.



*Parliament of the World's Religions poster*

The history of the Parliament goes back to 1893. At that time a World's Fair was held in Chicago, in the USA. Over 40 different countries had exhibitions at the fair. These showed off traditional things, and new ideas and inventions. Many exhibits demonstrated newly-designed electrical items. The world's first Ferris wheel was constructed at an amusement park at the fair. The Chicago World's Fair is also said to be the place where the American hamburger was introduced.

As people from so many countries visited Chicago for the World's Fair, other events were also

## NEWSCAST

**ARTWORK STOLEN** — A piece of art has been stolen from a gallery in the UK. The gallery says the item is worth £3,000 (US\$4,856). Gavin Turk, a British artist, made the piece of art, which is a house brick with his signature on it. In another part of the gallery there was a pile of ordinary bricks. During the exhibition visitors were encouraged to take one of these away with them, as a way of interacting with the exhibits. The gallery suspects a group of visitors swapped one of the ordinary bricks – worth about £0.40 (US\$0.65) – with the one signed by the artist.

arranged. One was the World's Parliament of Religions. Leaders from both Eastern and Western religious traditions met. This is considered to be the world's first official inter-religious meeting.

In 1993, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Chicago [gathering](#), a similar meeting was held in the same city. It was then decided to hold a meeting every five years and call it the Parliament of the World's Religions.

The Parliament has met in Cape Town, in South Africa, and Barcelona, in Spain. With each meeting the number of people from different faiths has increased. Around 8,000 people from 80 countries attended the meeting in Melbourne. Local Aboriginal people performed the opening ceremony. Many spiritual leaders from other [indigenous](#) groups from around the world also took part in the Parliament.



Dalai Lama making a speech at the Parliament

The theme of the meeting was 'Making a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing Each Other'. Those attending talked about how religious groups can work together to solve problems such as poverty, climate change and religious extremism, or [fundamentalism](#).

Zoroastrians, Jains, Pagans and atheists joined groups from the world's major religions – Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism – at the meeting.

## NewsCAST

**THEFT-A-SAURUS** — An exhibit worth £55,000 (US\$89,034) has been stolen from a display in Mexico. The *Walking With Dinosaurs* show from Australia is travelling around several countries. The display includes remote-controlled, life-like dinosaurs. After the first show in Mexico, officials said they noticed that a 1.5 metre (five feet) tall dinosaur was missing. The dinosaur is one of the smaller robots in the display. Others measure up to 13 metres (42 feet) high. Officials said this is the first time one of their exhibits had been stolen. However, they announced the show would continue as normal without the missing dinosaur.

One of the most popular speakers was the Dalai Lama, the Buddhist spiritual leader. During his speech he joked that when some Christians listen to his beliefs, they say he would make a 'good Christian'. He said he has often then told them they would also make good Buddhists.

The next Parliament of the World's Religions will take place in 2014. ▣

## FETE DES LUMIERES

From 5th to 8th December, a festival of lights was held in the city of Lyon, in France. Buildings, trees and public spaces around the city were [illuminated](#) or had images projected onto them.

In the Northern hemisphere it is currently winter. This means in many places it is dark by late afternoon. Many Northern hemisphere countries have light festivals at this

time of year. Some are based on very old traditions. Over hundreds of years people have celebrated with lamps and candles in winter to remind them that spring will soon begin and the days will start to get longer again.



Illuminated church in Lyon

The Fête des Lumières takes place every year. It is based around a holy day in the Roman Catholic Church known as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. It celebrates the Virgin Mary, who in Christian tradition was the mother of Jesus Christ. The first light festival was held in Lyon in 1852.

Lyon is also known as the home of the Lumière brothers, who lived there from 1870. The two brothers were among the first people to make motion pictures, or films, and to develop colour photography.

For the Fête des Lumières, large light displays were created around the city. These included a garden of 'flowers' made from lights and a Ferris wheel with a screen onto which pictures could be projected. There was also a projection onto a church that made the building appear to move and breathe in time to music. During the festival homeowners put lighted candles in their windows. These are placed behind pieces of coloured glass.

People could pay €2 (US\$2.90) to light a single candle in a display of hundreds of candles in one of the city's squares. The money collected



was given to a charity called Secours Populaire Français. This charity helps poorer people in France and many other countries.

The organisers of the Fête des Lumières have become concerned about the amount of electricity used during the festival. Now many LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs are used instead of incandescent light bulbs. LEDs use much less electricity than old-style light bulbs. The festival also had a place where people could drop off their old light bulbs to be recycled.

Souvenirs were on sale during the festival. These included different types of candles and even an umbrella with a handle that lights up in the dark. City officials said around four million people visited Lyon during the festival. ■

## WORLD'S OLDEST BUTTER?

Two blocks of butter have been discovered in Antarctica. The butter, which was made in New Zealand, was found close to a hut used by Captain Robert Falcon Scott in an expedition that took place between 1910 and 1913. This means the butter, which has stayed frozen, is almost 100 years old.



*Captain Scott's hut*

Captain Scott was a British explorer. He and his team built the wooden hut, close to the coast, in 1910 when they arrived in Antarctica

by boat from New Zealand. They also built a stable close by for their ponies. The hut and stable were abandoned at the end of the expedition.

Over many years the hut became buried in snow. Last year money was raised to clear away the snow and make some repairs to the historic building.



*Photograph of Captain Scott and his team at the South Pole in 1912*

The workers found some of the equipment used on the expedition. They also discovered the two blocks of frozen butter, under a pile of empty boxes close to the stable.

Captain Scott had planned to be the first person to reach the South Pole. A series of food and fuel stores, called depots, were set out along his planned route. These were to be used on his return journey, as the explorers would not be able to carry everything they needed to get to the South Pole and back.

Once the depots had been set up some members of the team returned to the hut to wait while Captain Scott and four others made the final journey to the Pole. But their equipment and clothes were not suited to the freezing conditions. The ponies all died and the men had to pull the sledges carrying their food and equipment.

Captain Scott's team arrived at the South Pole in January 1912. There they found a Norwegian flag. An explorer from Norway, Roald

Amundsen, had reached the Pole five weeks before them.

By the time Captain Scott and his team had completed three-quarters of the 1,300 kilometre (800 mile) journey back to the hut, two of his men had died. Captain Scott and his remaining two companions then became trapped in their tent by a bad snow storm that lasted for days. Unable to reach the next depot, they ran out of fuel and food, and froze to death.

The men waiting at the hut realised something must have happened to the explorers and set out to look for them. Eventually, the men found the tent. Captain Scott had kept a diary in which he had written down what had happened. He also had a camera. Later a photograph was developed from the film showing Captain Scott and his team standing at the South Pole.

The people who found the butter at Captain Scott's hut said it seemed to be perfectly preserved, although it had a very strong smell. From the initials on the label they hope to find out who made it. They say the butter will be put back where it was found. They hope it will remain frozen at the hut for another 100 years. ■

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**Editor:** Amber Thody

### Acknowledgements:

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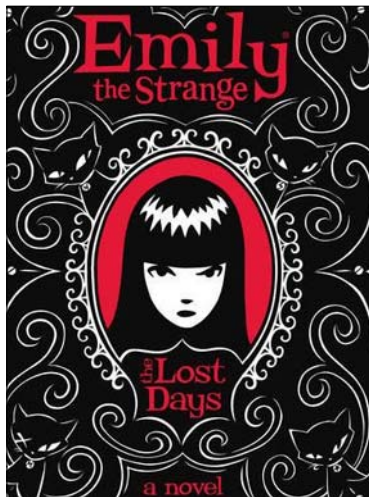
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# B O O K R E V I E W

## HAVE YOU READ ...?



coffee shop, where she sweeps the floor so she can get free sandwiches. She wants to find her name, her true home, and the reason she's in Blackrock.

She meets up with 'Moon Child' Jakey, a nine-year-old psychic who seems to be able to read her mind while playing his video games. He helps her uncover clues to who she is and why she's stuck in Blackrock. Jakey is a member of the Umlaut gang, which bribes the local police for the privilege of breaking windows and acting generally rotten.

In the meantime, young magician Attikol is searching the town of Blackrock for something magical, and will stop at nothing to find it. What is it? It might just be Emily's dress. Its pockets can hold endless quantities of large objects, such as rocks and scrap lumber, without showing any bulges.

This is a weird book with a real sense of mystery to it. As it opens, Emily is trying to piece together what she *does* know – she's a girl, wearing black, who is left-handed – and fill in the gaps of what she *doesn't* – why are there bruises on her left arm? and what was written on the eleven pages torn from the beginning of her notebook?

I like the mystery of this book the best. Once Emily began finding clues, I was hooked.

Emily slowly begins to discover things about herself – for example, she is skilled at mechanics. She can even calculate terminal velocity! Later we find out more about her inventions. Sometime before her amnesia, she invented a *golem*, a kind of walking robotic creature. Obviously she is a genius. She also invented a sandstorm generator, which works only too well.

A 13-year-old girl cannot remember much, including her own name, because – she's pretty sure – she has amnesia.

She's stuck in the squalid, dull, desert town of Blackrock. In her diary, she decides to write all the mundane details of small-town existence. She adopts spiders and cats, and sleeps alongside them in a cardboard box behind the El Dungeon

Frustratingly for Emily, some people who meet her seem to recognise her, but none will clue her in. By the time Emily finds she closely resembles Emma LeStrande – the founder of the town – I was excited to get to the heart of the mystery. Emma may have something to do with Emily's lost memory, and with something magnificent that's hidden. Is this a case of reincarnation? Does the supernatural play a part? Or is Emily imagining it? The answers to many of this story's mysteries lie in the town of Blandindulle (the book has a number of towns with weird names).

Emily is a sharp, clever heroine, who has to work out Attikol's [motives](#) for his strange behaviour and actions – which include forcing people to sell their property to him so they must leave town. Why is he doing this? What secrets is he trying to cover up?

This book is all written in the form of Emily's diary. Grammar goes out of the window. There aren't any chapters. There are handwritten scrawls as well as typed words, and drawings of characters (with lots of cats), maps, and even the image of those mysterious torn pages. Emily's style is that of an inquisitive, restless Goth girl who enjoys her own nightmares.

This book is a pretty quick read. Sometimes Emily writes in lists of ideas or possibilities as to why things are happening to her or in the town – so it's straight to the point, without very long paragraphs of exposition. This book would be most enjoyed by readers of ages 13 and up. The next one, *Emily the Strange: Stranger and Stranger* is due out in March 2010.

*Emily the Strange: the Lost Days*: a novel by Rob Reger and Jessica Gruner, illustrated by Rob Reger and Buzz Parker. HarperCollins Children's Books.

Reviewed by **Craig Purdon**

## WANT US TO REVIEW A BOOK THAT YOU HAVE READ AND ENJOYED?

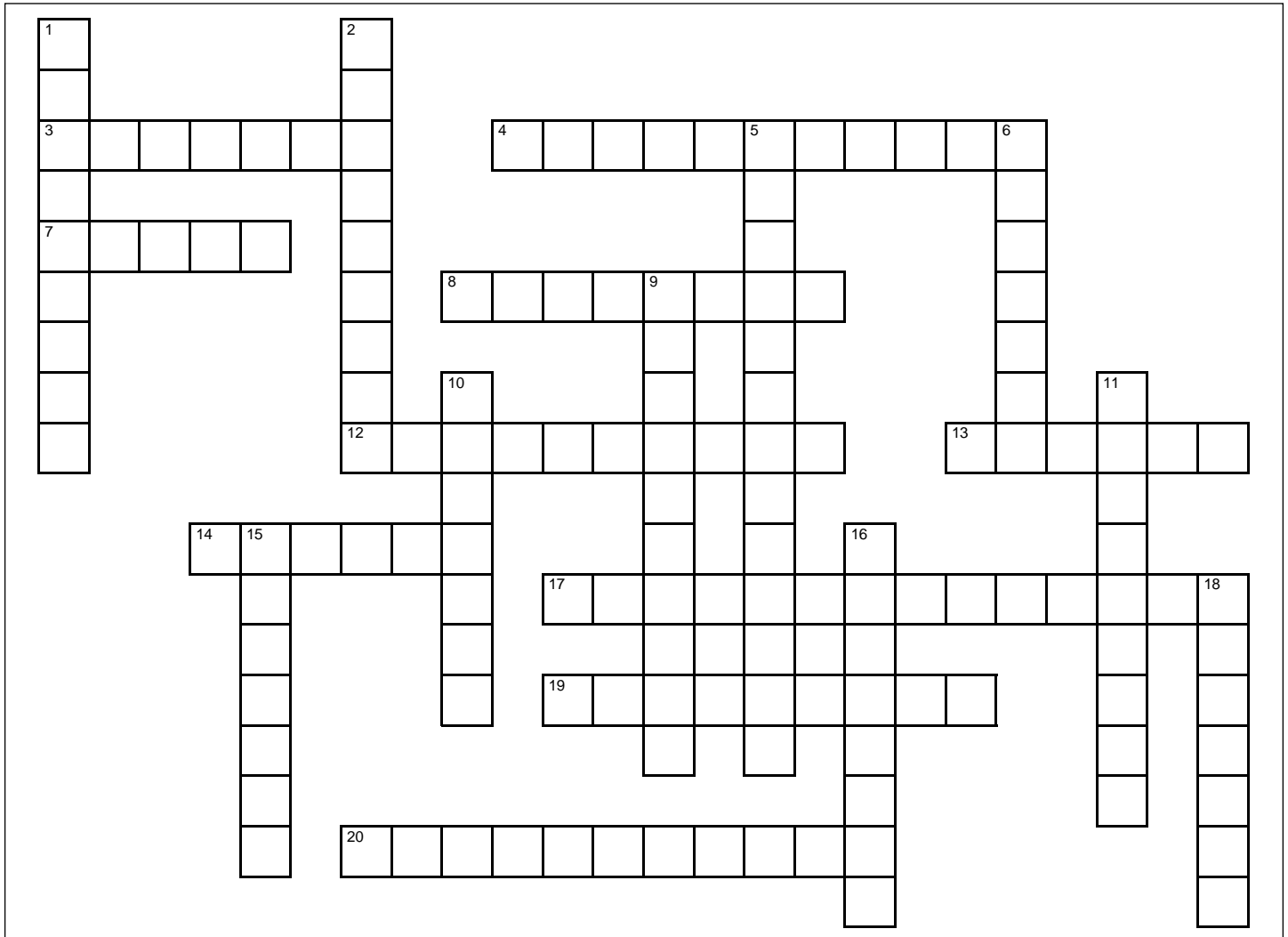
If you do, look for the 'recommended book' link in your subscriber menu when you log in to our website.

Complete the form and tell us why you enjoyed the book. If we review your choice, we'll mention your name and include some of your comments.

# GLOSSARY

## PRIZE COMPETITION

**INSTRUCTIONS:** ① Complete the crossword. The answers are highlighted in orange in the news stories. There are 25 words highlighted and you need 20 of them to complete the crossword. ② Once you have solved the crossword find the 20 words in the word search on the next page ➡



### Across

- 3 Verb** To persuade someone to work for a company or help an organisation  
**4 Adjective** Lit up  
**7 Verb** To choose to start using a new way of doing things, such as technology or ideas  
**8 Verb** Showed or announced something for the first time  
**12 Noun (Plural)** General rules or instructions  
**13 Noun** A narrow channel of water that connects two larger areas of sea  
**14 Noun** Something that is dangerous or can cause an accident  
**17 Noun** Believing in and acting according to a set of very strict religious rules  
**19 Noun (Plural)** Things kept as a reminder of a person, place, or event  
**20 Adjective** Describes something that could be stopped

### Down

- 1 Noun** The amount by which something is curved or bent  
**2 Noun** A meeting or party when many people come together at the same place  
**5 Noun (Plural)** Animals that do not have backbones  
**6 Noun** The total amount by which money spent is more than money received  
**9 Adjective** Originating in a particular country  
**10 Adjective** Describes something that can be made to happen by law  
**11 Noun (Plural)** Very small pieces or parts of something larger  
**15 Verb** To make something louder  
**16 Verb** To discover the meaning of something, especially a code  
**18 Noun (Plural)** Reasons for doing something



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